

ODE TO HAND WASHING

Honeysuckle, verbena
The scent of soap in my pores
The rubbing of hands
Of palms, floral
The anointing of fingers
Rinsing, splashing
Lingering, singing
The steepled fingers
The hands open
Receiving, renewed
The rushing of water
The baptism of possibility
This paeon to returning home
The antecedent to leaving
This long-awaited release of all
That is contaminated.
The concentrate of time, of day, of summer
This balm,
This distillation of time
The sacredness
The scarcity
Ending the day,
This ritual of healing
An ablution
Like the hummingbird
Entering the flower
The scent of honeysuckle
Becomes part of my journey
The fish in the coral

I am holding my own hand
Swallowed in floral
I know I am alive
Because of the rush of water
And I am alive because of this waterfalling
This celebration of water
Calling me forth
Which I carry into my day
Like a rubbing of hope
So that I can peel off the words
Written on my skin
The words come off quickly
Like a fever lifting
Like the shedding of clothes
Before a lover

—*Deborah Leipziger*

RAIN ON PURITAN LAWN

Have you ever seen a
cemetery in a rainstorm?
How the tears of the clouds cleanse
the monuments of the dead?

The tombstone, a curious thing—
a shrine for our departed,
a temple for our sorrows.
At Puritan Lawn, they do not
jut out from the ground, but
lie flat and look to the sky above.

The living make offerings—
a flag of Ireland,
flowers bright blue,
a cross of palms, perhaps
a photograph of former youth,
or a spinning pink pinwheel,
a stuffed elephant or duckling.

(I wonder what the squirrels
make of those—apparently
they like to stuff their acorns
in the attached chained vases.)

These shrines of the dead,
surrounded by tall, old trees,
blowing in the warm wind by
the water, a large Lynnfield lake,
while the cars of Route 1
hum in the distance.

As I look upon these flat stones
which stare up at the Heavens,
I wonder what it must be like
for pouring rain to fall
on all the tall old trees
and flat stones of Puritan Lawn.
How the empty grass and
concrete roads must ring
with static natural noise.
How the stones and shrines
and picture frames,
drooping blue flowers
and spinning pinwheels
must bathe in the clouds'

sweet release of water,
evaporated from all the
brooks, rivers, lakes, ponds,
and oceans—ascending to the sky,
where they wait to come back to
earth, to visit the ones they lost,
who long for them now.

—*Dan Calnan*

I blame the petals—

the scallop-edged
the pink-throated
the generous and
frail

first bound
then loosed
wheeling
spring wind-wisps—

because of them
I too have peopled
this earth.

—*Mary Buchinger*

BUTTERFLIES AND BREATHING

On a cold January night,
with snow touching our tongues of pink and moon,
I reach out my heart and take hold of you.
With your showering gaze of adoring hemlock,
you asked me to come toward you...
like pretty keys turning latches long untouched, how could I not.
Your faithful horse, at your side, almost an extension of your arm.
You, an exotic desert strand, a breed of man like crystal sand—
I find my lips pressed against yours...
it felt as if two pearls were meeting on a rising silver queen.
You told me butterflies and breathing.

—*Jennifer Matthews*

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NEXT IS EXACTLY WHAT YOU DID

Unfortunately, younger self, if I were to tell you that you have only
to survive five years between the night the floor fell away
beneath your first marriage and the day you will meet her at last—
if I counsel endurance and you believe me, then it's all too possible
you won't find yourself semi-lunatic with loneliness,
won't erupt a babbling breakdown during play rehearsal,
won't finally turn to a Wiccan therapist whose best treatment,
you discover, isn't her hypno-sessions or the affirmation tapes
you soak up on your way to sleep, but her tricking you
into writing personal ads and reading them.

And if you don't do all that you will never meet the love of your life.
Take that cliché seriously because those are the stakes.

Therefore I'm afraid you must remain unknowing and miserable
for the time being. I won't tell you anything.

—*David P. Miller*

THE AFTERNOON

- after Mahmoud Darwish

*If I were told:
By evening you will die,
So what will you do until then?*

Of course, there would be a flurry of emails
Or perhaps one email sent to all. No, that would
not do. The flurry then. Of where to find the keys,
the passwords, codes, the papers that sort a life. Meaning.
Meaning.

I would want to see the round faces of the soon-
to-be-mourners of my love, family, shining moons against a dark
backdrop. Friends. I would wish to view the sky in whatever mood it's taken.
Bright like this morning's or thunderous. Something's happening: why
not bolts of light thrown by some god.

I would call my great love of youth when pain and beauty were
one thing, who is married to someone else, whose number I do not
have, but would try for a half hour to find before forsaking
the task to futility. Flowers would be necessary,
white tulips, white roses, the afros

of hydrangea, in vases set throughout the apartment. The time
would pass too quickly with this work. I would walk down the stairs
to bid adieu to my neighbors. Good-bye, I would say to them
all. Back up, I would regard my dead relatives in photos,
to let them know I was on my way.

I would bathe, brush my hair in a bun, paint my nails indigo.
Frankincense would burn, drift up in plumes. I would lie on
the couch with the music of drums—*yanvalou*—and call
out to them *I am ready*.

—*Danielle Legros Georges*

EVERY BODY

dies, including me. And
my two cats, one brother, three
sisters. Everybody dies.
And I cannot bear it.

Or the slow sink. The knee's
creak. Everything moves down,
the stomach muscles sag, the bladder, all
the muscles loosen—the start of untying
the knot.

—*Susan Lloyd McGarry*

THINGS I HAVE TO

I have to twist into the sky,
raw and leafless,
whipped but persisting
despite the ravenous wind.

I have to be naked
and rough and, when it rains,
become darker than the air.

I have to swing
serenely up
into the indifferent breath
of another day grown late.

I have to absorb all that falls,
lest my dryness spread
until I snap and scatter.

I have to burrow through the dense
and tangled earth
so when it thaws
I might emerge

soft and full, might warm
to each sunrise
as it occurs.

—*Eileen McCluskey*

I HAVE TO ASK

Does God
want anything

to do with me?

Am I the right type?

If I had a cigarette,

I'd light it,

hoping God

would see.

I'd find

a climbable tree.

Settle beside a squirrel

busy scolding me.

I'd detach

my prayer

like a leaf from a twig.

—*Jennifer Barber*

TWISTER DREAM

I'm always standing—on the ground
near a culvert, sometimes atop
the hopper car I'm loading
with wheat on a grain elevator spur.

From the southwest, a boil of black
roils my way, its sick-green innards
spewing tails of cloud that gouge
the earth, whips that lash
closer and closer, while new funnels
sprout and hang like teats
from the angry she-wolf sky.

Run! someone screams. But my feet
are miles away, severed
by the long knife my mother hides
in her kitchen's east drawer.

So I hobble on stumps, each step
a stab—until I twirl and slash
through the swirling, dirt-choked air.

I am the freight-train roar.

I am the hammer of hail on boxcars and rails,
the moan of wind over barbed wire.

—*Justin Hunt*

REVENGE

My prince has come and gone,
his voice taken by the wind.
Over a cliff I pushed him.
I had no regrets, but
he had my phone in his pocket.

Every cloud has a lining of irony.
I tried the phone, he answered,
alive after all, battered, now
only a mother could love him.
The whirl of his wheelchair annoys me.

—*Triona McMorrow*

DIFFICULT CHILD

In the kitchen, my neighbor's young daughter climbed on a chair,
pulled a dull knife from the counter, and threatened
to kill herself. Her parents sat in the den,
and when I rose said, *The doctor told us,*
ignore her until she calms down.
She was the difficult child. I went in.
She put down the knife.

I understand her, what she was doing and also why
her parents didn't rise from their chairs;
I understand the pull of the empty threat and the threat
of the empty threat. I was the difficult child
who hid outside in the dark, so my parents
couldn't find me. *We were about to call the police,*
my father said. The little girl grew to trust
the dream catcher she hung over her bed
would capture nightmares,
let good dreams slip through.

I trust the dream:
the one in which my sister finds,
in the bedtable drawer, my mother's
gold necklace that I'd misplaced
and there it is when I wake. The dream
where I lean across the table
toward a woman in shadow and say,
Grandma, neither of us has that much time;
the one where my friend walks beside me
on the bike path then says, *Stay here,*
and heads back to her death.
And the one in which my neighbors
enter the kitchen where their daughter
is doing the dance of the knives,
and they admire her skill, her magical feet,
the quick flash of steel. Their arms
around her, all of us dance.

—Kathleen Aguero

MARLBORO SUMMER, 1968

Life has gone by as if I never lived
- Anton Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*

One of the Casals summers, a sizzling cicada year
my mother started a popup art gallery in an old barn
in Marlboro. Before the internet, before the gas crisis
back when long-distance calling cost something, she put it together—
rented an old farmhouse for us—a long, white, added-to thing
with a wraparound porch—and shared the rental of the barn
down the road with a summer theater company.

The gallery centerpiece was a bronze bust of Casals,
but most of the rest of the art belonged to my mother.
Once summer began we piled into the new Plymouth
station wagon stuffed to the roof with paintings.

For a few weeks before camp started
we'd hang around the gallery during play rehearsals—
The Importance of Being Earnest—
and soon mouthed the lines along with the actors
until we knew all the words—
the pauses and the laugh spots—
without really understanding the meaning.

I hated the sleepaway camp my mother sent us to that summer—
I liked the crafts but not the campers. I molded clay
into elephants and embroidered a turtle onto green felt,
stuffed it with cotton, and stitched it closed. Soon
I acquired a fever so fierce my mother had to come
and take me home early. Two days in Vermont
and the fever broke—I ran through the overgrown grass
and returned to the barn—the mouthing, the pauses—
first *The Misanthrope*, then *The Cherry Orchard*.

The next week a new relative—my mother's Tante Margot
visited with us from Peru where she ended up
in 1939, after her ship was permitted to land.
She brought us ponchos and woven bags made from llama wool.
Proudly she told me that when she was young
she and Grandma had servants to cook meals
and others to unroll their stockings at night.

I didn't wear stockings yet, didn't understand
that when you flee for your life
those might be the things you miss.

—Carla Schwartz

MIDNIGHT

It is midnight and the sky
is silent like an empty bed

no stars wink at us, no star moves
clouds are parked in garages

what crosses the mind is silence
everything is breathing quietly

can we imagine a world
everything, everybody at rest

no—there, the rice paddies are
being picked clean outside Beijing

and the garbage is being rounded up
on the streets of New York

In Rio de Janeiro whores in tight shorts
stand on corners and smoke cigarettes

In Cairo tourists wait for the bus
to Cheops and the Sphinx

Everywhere it goes on, somewhere
there is something—the garage doors

open, the stars begin chugging
the universe has breakfast

—*Zvi A. Sesling*

PERPETUAL TWILIGHT

for my mother

I plunge into the hot space
a monochrome canvas—
dumb furniture holds you

In here time is spent
and spent again
a dull ache grief throbs

Through the gritty window
an arc of last light
on silver hair

Time presses against your skin
leaving lines
on the papery surface—

Your hands hang
limp disfigured
by arthritic nodes

I secure your hearing aid
the last one lost
in a crevice

knit together particles of dust
to make a coat
for your shivering shoulders—

January dusk purple light
the flush of your cheeks fading
into oncoming night.

—*Ruth Chad*

THE WEAVE OF YEARS AND MEMORIES

I remember that the moon
was a circle of soft whiteness
that stopped me, seventeen,
on the first step
up to our kitchen's side door

while I relived the game
my mother and I had played
in my childhood:
imagining the moon's
dark smudges were little islands
surrounded by white seas
waiting for us to name.

Till my mother opened the door
and, guessing what I was doing,
smiled at the sky, then at me
and I right away broke the moment
and brushed past her into the house—
still angry because that morning
her sour mood's curt remark
cut off the song I was singing.

What was it she had said?...
I can't recall one word.
All I remember, now,
as vividly as if
my fingers touched a flame,
is passing her on the steps
and the instant disappointment
on her pale unsmiling face

—*Robert K. Johnson*

APARTMENT 2412

Her breath rattles all morning.
Her legs quiver toward her torso.
Which version should I tell?
Not the preface of loss, but the center.
Not the tick of the clock, the hospital bed
jammed to an edge of the room.
But verses of Corinthians unspooled
from a daughter's mouth.
Another page of specific prayers.
Not the reiteration, and family
in the kitchen eating piles of meat
above a spalted wood floor.
Not even looking at the sky's soft tissue.
The rest of the week,
we can't hear the land hum.
What I mean is we learn
all that could have been and never once
think this scatter of seconds is anguish.
And then the last night
the man who will lose the woman pushes
the syringe between her pursed lips.
This will make you feel good, he says,
and the sound of his voice
is a refrain as she disappears.
I'm sure this took courage
I don't know that I have.
I'm tired of the beauty of summer.
Mozart keeps circling, the CD on repeat.

—*Lauren Camp*

GLARE

Fistfuls of fresh grass
thrown into the wind.
West.
I needed guidance,
finally entrusting the natural world.

I followed the setting sun,
just as the wind told me to,
into a thickly shadowed wood,
relentlessly pierced by beautifully blinding sunbeams.
Godrays of every color.

Further west,
deeper than I had ever wandered before,
lay a young deer in a bed of flowers.
He had been shot, waiting to die,
his eye blinded by a particular sunbeam.

I watched him for a moment,
but no one came.
So I moved ever-so-slightly to the west,
and I sat with him.
He wasn't scared in the slightest.

So we sat
amongst the flowers
blinded by a sun soon to set
theorizing how we got here
and remembering what comes next.

—*George Rosatone*

DOE IN THE PATH

If you come I will be silent.

I will not ask you why.

- Audre Lorde

You left us, without warning,
without a final goodbye.
No time for our mourning.

She came and stood—stilled.
her moist brown eyes filled
with your presence. Her wet
nose and skin twitched. Still,
she held her gaze, our eyes met...

That spot where water gathers
does not hold her foot prints
or mine. She gathered herself.
Like a flicker of light, she was gone.
I could feel you there. Now I'm alone.

You and I planted bushes here,
years back, two butterfly shrubs,
purple and white both planted near
each other for our dead mothers.

Now I will plant a bush for you,
a butterfly bush—we agreed,
in a sun speckled spot near
where I drop white clover seeds.
—Sandra Thaxter

BANKSIDE

There was a part of the river that kept to itself,
that was slow, forever idling along in the shade
of the trees on the bank, turning and turning,

now and then having picked up somewhere upstream
the wand of a willow branch, lazily drawing
big circles that overlapped, like a chain, not like

the heavy steel chain you might think of, but one
pasted together out of loops of brown paper,
a kindergarten chain. Now and then it came past

with a bottle it found, or pushing a log along,
but that kind of thing was never a chore for it,
just summer idleness. That was the part I loved,

that *I'm-off-by-myself-but-enjoying-it* side
of the river that I'd call Hello to, that warm part
I reached for, putting my hand on its shoulder.

—*Ted Kooser*

MAY RAIN

May opens like a music box
with a splash of raindrops
against the window which creates
a wet symphony of notes
as if from a lively musical fantasy.
Droplets land on cherry petals
that fall to the ground—
glow against green grass.
Later, they will rise in the wind
and fly into the infinite
blue of the spring sky.

—*Lainie Senechal*

ODE TO THE NORTHEAST WIND IN SPRING

You spoil everything that bestows hope in life,
sweeping across the North Atlantic to gather
its lingering winter cold from stormy waves
to blight earth's surge to resurrect once again.

The wind of winter's last gasp! False prophet
of the future, bringer of hail and revolting snow!

Your icy howls! No one wants to be like you –
a slave to Winter, its hollow, remnant carcass.

Your chill seeps into secluded corner patches,
settles on bluets, starflowers, dumbfounds

the patient rhododendron, the mountain laurel.
Caicias, with frosty air you bully bees hovering

in dappled light. You carry grudges with the sun
sending clouds to catch and release its rays.

You never stop. Even in deepest dark
you dare to prowl storm-bitten windows

waiting to mock the dawn with frigid breath
that slips through the stolid spruce.

Jittery escapee from Winter's prison! You
menace backyards, hold hostage those

buoyant ones who rake and trim their yards,
daunting them with shiv-like stabs to the body.

Harsh wild one! You're too much for me:
an old man who'll no longer suffer your cruel bites.

Whenever you come calling, I'll stay indoors
and eye from warmth the shivery bloodroots.

—*David Cappella*

OPENING DAY

A two day roarer in the pines
ends without my losing any,
though I watched them leaning,
trying to leave town. Apparently
while my back was turned
the forsythia exploded itself open.
April, and soon that yellow will be
as commonplace as the white shingles
it fronts all over the county.
Now the nuthatches can begin
their annual chase. Then the Asian
pear trees, offering white bouquets
to the new sky. A rubythroat will be after
the hanging sugar water the sun is
treating the way it treats this
untrimmed splash of golden leaf light.
Rain will lift that water to the hummer's
thirst, and the grandfather apple tree
I dug a hole for over fifty years ago,
knotted and spindly now
like me, will flower last as usual.
A single trout lily sent as
a seed from one who knows where
nods in agreement at the edge
of the walkway.

—*Brendan Galvin*

SCREEN PORCH SPIDER WEB

for Kitty, David and Hannah

High in the doorframe, she's building
a home, spinning it out
of her body, strand after strand,
cast and fasten, cast—

her work, a wordless prayer,
unseen unless the sun
glints on it late afternoon...
No matter: it holds, rain or shine.

—*Gayle Roby*

I AM SPRING

I am Spring
as I shout with anger into the Wind
why have my ideas not been sown and turning green?

I am Spring
and ask my Eyes to have sight and not be sour
looking to the East for assurance.

I am Spring
knowing inside me
it is time to Bloom with Care.

I am Spring
and while the Trunk of me is not Wood
I shall be Planted, Rooted and Grow.

I shall Embrace you—Spring!

—*Christine Remus*

A FEATHER ON A MY WINDOWSILL

I found it on the ground
under a tree in a cemetery

The owl lost its feather
The feather became separate
from the body It floated down
was caught by the grasses
of the ground by my eye
then my hand

Hollowed spine of feather
some downy fluff attached
and barbs fine-knit for motion
the deep-dark array iridescent
in just the right light

I stand by the window
holding it tilting it.

—*Hilary Sallick*

AND THE SKY WILL BE BLUE

Inspired by the song and lyrics of Bailero

Shepherd, are you having a good time?
The meadow is greener on our side.
If you can't sing Bailero,
just listen to the chants
of Auvergne.
If you can't see that far, smell
the scent of wild narcissi,
blue sage,
yellow daisies and
pink cow parsley.
Bring your lambs to graze on our side.
Creek is shallow, not rapid.
Do not let the water divide us.
I will come down to help you.
Let's bring over the lambs
one by one,
stand in the middle of the water,
jump, jump,
do not let the water divide us.

Come and visit us, shepherd.
A long way from
Auvergne to California.
Not now, not
under the orange sky.
Comes, next spring, shepherd
comes.
Bring your lambs to see
the blooming California poppy,
the infinite orange meadow
blankets the whole valley.

And the sky will be blue.

—*Livingston Rossmoor*

I'VE BEEN FELLSED

*To be a hill, to be a sandy beach, to be a Saturday, all are possible verbs
in the world where everything is alive.*

- Robin Wall Kimmerer

It happened after I was dogged.
My wife's the pet person, but at the shelter
I was the one who said, "That's the one."
Still objectified, still a that,
although it would not take long for that to become she
because I was the one who sat in the chair by her cage
and woke every hour for a walk until she got her shit together.
And there was exercise, but you can't be as old as I am
and not have been around the block enough to want a different routine,
and we live close to the Middlesex Fells,
which beckoned with 2000 acres of trails
and birches, white oaks (reds and blacks), beeches,
shagbark hickories, pines (two kinds),
hemlocks, sassafras, bloodroot, lady's slippers,
and, my God that wet year the mushrooms:
the large ones and small ones,
the red ones and brown ones,
the shelf ones and single ones
the bunches and masses
the masses of bunches
but none with a name I could name
neither common nor Latin
except for the vulgar, stink horn/naked penis—

The dog dragged me daily through all that fecundity
first by duty, then habit until habit turned into need,
and as when a faucet drips until the sink is full, overflowing
I came into my ignorance; it washed all around me
and I found I'd been fellsed.
Roused and humbled.
I could no more know these Fells
than I could know any being.
I had been fellsed,
made aware of the range of my arrogance
of the range of my ignorance,
of that, which is always,
the unknown, which is all ways.
I had been fellsed, all joyed up with questions.

—Wendell Smith

MORNING GLORY, AMEN

For Andrea on her birthday

It begins with one shovel thrust into the soil.
It begins with humming together as stars streak the night sky.
It begins deep in our belly.
It begins with a light touch just in passing.
It begins when yesterday's discussion ended.
Now it begins. A fresh breeze rustles palm trees.
A bee hovers in the slanting light.
The day has dawned. We are waiting in the shade.
Our eyes seek cover from a blazing sun.
We enrich the soil with pale hands. This hole we have dug
Is filled shovel by shovelful.
It begins with water poured from a bucket.
Our feet stamp and tamp the earth.
The waiting begins. The watching begins. This breathing together.
Roots unfurl in the dark.
We feel growing tendrils reach for more and more
Life for the morning glory, amen.

—*Branton Shearer*

GOD'S BELLY

God's belly, I am yours to love,
Yours to use or yours to betray.
My lips conclude what's hard to say
As we do not go hand in glove.

My enemies, both hawk and dove
Spread fraudulence, spread sham hearsay.
God's belly, I am yours to love.

In spite of push and errant shove,
I keep my course. I will not stray
To Samarkand or Bombay.
What was below is now above.
God's belly, I am yours to love.

—*Dennis Daly*

A FRIEND IN TIME

For Branton

I remember eyeing you across a heavy
dark wood table at Adelynrood, my
friend-to-be, your enthusiasm lightening
the sodden air. I've had so few close friends,

but knew you would be one. I trusted the way
you put your cards on the table, opened
your hand to me, jokers and all. With you
I could be a fool. What's more important?

We don't talk long now, except on
rare occasions—warm evenings in the Square
or on Ohio terraces or sunset beaches
on the North Shore. But we still appreciate

many of the same things: The poet's love
of drunken conversation, of waves and
wild winds, of people ticking like clocks
or time bombs. We celebrate tornadoes

from the eye of the storm. We cry and laugh
at life's hugeness, at how small we are, at
how little we know—two old fools on a
life raft, rising and falling together.

—Lawrence Kessenich

OLDER AGAIN

Is it possible to lose so much
it starts to look like wisdom?

The sun is up and like everyone
else, not obligated to help you.

At least your feet haven't yet failed,
or they haven't learned to yet.

Your time's still here. It has
no choice. It stumbles lockstep

with you, two drunks heading
home, deserving each other.

—Chad Parenteau

THE NIGHT OUR PUP SAW HER FIRST TRAIN

It was only a four-car train.
I didn't know where
it started from
or where it was headed.

After it crossed the wooden trestle
on the outskirts of Santa Fe
where we had come in search of roadrunners
I tipped my cap

and the riders in their Sunday-
go-to-meeting best stood
and began waving as if they knew
it was my birthday.

Squinting in hazy sunset,
red tide blanketing desert,
I could just make out
their smiling faces.

And when the moon began its rise
like the flower of a thornapple opening,
the train with its company
of distant, excited passengers was gone.

Then a kettle of nighthawks flooded the twilight.
I tipped my cap to them, too,
and a roadrunner, dusk phantom,
appeared, raised its crest, sped away.

—*Howie Faerstein*

AAHOOEY AHOOEY...

Gauze strips of evening
replaced by shrouds of night
seem seamless progressions hiding
omens of fertilized evil.
Night is a many-car train
drawn by an ancient coal engine
with dark caboose, endings not revealed.
Intervening cars carry people somnambulant
tankers full of vitriol
hoppers full of diggings from unknown lands
and box-cars—
many box cars—
their sliding doors shut tight
concealing cancerous cargos.
We are, each night,
hoboes by the track
clustered around fires
shedding scant warmth and light,
no insight to where that night will bring us.

Odd we do not rebel against the sunset
shred the gathering gauze
demand accounting from darkness to learn
what awaits at the end of the line.
But...

I understand reticence
acceptance of denouements
when placidity promises possibility of peace.

We are shoveling coals into the fire box,
ignoring sting of sweat in our eyes
aches in unwilling arms
welcoming repeating clack of wheels
seduced by train whistles stretching across our darkness.

—*Stephen M. Honig*

SECRET

to a baby-to-be

I went walking
in summer twilight,
wondering when
you will arrive—

a secret I thought
the moon knew
and might whisper
to the stars.

I thought the wind
might tell me, or
an owl hoo-hooing
from her nest;

but the soft
rustle of shadows
gave no hint
of your coming,

and all I heard
beneath the river's
silvering song
was silence.

I sat down to wait
among the reeds
as Earth awaited
her full season.

—*Dorian Brooks*

A kind of wooden family

I worry about my trees—not
pitch pines or white oaks.
We have forests of them.
Chop one down, two grow.

I worry about my weeping
beech every nor'easter,
every hurricane. Up ocean
they come splintering

houses, breaking off trees.
I worry about my biggest
sugar maple, whose roots
grew into the old septic

tank and now the drain
bypasses its huge girth.
I lost my tall white fir
I grew from a chesspiece

sized seedling. Lightning
split another beech I planted.
Trees are bigger, stronger
than I could ever be, but

they too are mortal. They
eat and drink, produce off
spring, talk with neighbors
and like me will finally die.

—*Marge Piercy*

FOR THE SEQUOIAS

whose ancestors John Muir sought
far and wide, finding none,
bottom- and topmost turtle.

Wondering
or failing to wonder at them
because we cannot measure up,
it's easy to speak against these
high embodiments of years,
takers of our youth and loves.

They number *us*, each
deepening through brief splendors of autumn
to the long attenuation of our depth
and cover, to a nudity
who will fumble with?

Sky-bound, street-wide stepped—
30 couples waltzed on the diameter
floor of the first one felled by a gold-rusher.

As much they tell us
we shade ourselves beyond the sunken
tooth in the fruit, the promise is borne
of our ongoing need
to witness these things, being
remembered—time's tail in time's mouth—
otherwise as soon erased and lost,

the rain and the shaken leaves, the swifts in front
of the storm, the hawk in the silence after.

—*Michael Todd Steffen*

PECKING ORDER

A pair of cardinals, territorial,
have made this sprawling garden their domain;
the male, his red feathers sartorial,
announces, at first light, exclusive reign.

From a conspicuous tree's apogee
he calls his few notes with authority—
as if installed by some papal decree,
stating his grand realm's rule, assertively.

Indifferent sparrows give him deference,
knowing they are his kingdom's underlings.
A starling sulks; yields bird-bath precedence.
Two mourning doves flee with a rush of wings.

But when the cardinals retreat to sleep
a lawless mockingbird sings, just for me.

—*Denise Provost*

*

Like that umbrella you left on the train
the moon is moving east to west
wants to be returned, held close

while its warm breeze opens
and over your head grows dim
is emptied then reaches out

the way the lonely go mad
look for a place that's a there from here
where everything on Earth is lost

—what you once held in your hands
is still falling away, filling a great valley
with moonlight and the heaviness

keeping it in place so you dead
can find the rain with your eyes closed
and count the seats each evening.

—*Simon Perchik*

THE EMPTY COVID OCTOPUS

Tubes dance from ventilators
like
Infected dancing
Octopus tails.
They, the infected warriors,
stare out the window
With help from I
To look below from window
see the soaked
drenched, devastated
and confused faces
Of loved ones below.
Independence is robbed
Wheeled to the toilet by I
and robbed of privacy by I
Using instructed body mechanics
To rotate and give comfort and not
to degrade a human
and i am soooo sorry
as I humbly
Wipe the
Yellow
Brown
Or even red black
mud excrement
From the crease of your
butt.
Emptying your foley
Catheter|
Is an honor
The smell bothers me no more
Because I am thrilled that your body
And your kidneys
Are connecting.
Freedom from the vent during the day is like finding inner truth
Santa Clause
Or even the north star
Or getting a great deal on
Iwannalive.com
Yet..
Careful
You are still not you nor will you be
You are in a place
That I would sell my soul to not to be in.
This place is where
you are still isolated in a room with a glass window
And a speaker video system
Then

Hooked to the machine at night
 That keeps you alive
 While the trachea and breathing tubes
 Rob your speech
 And sleep
 And all you have are memories of
 The before
 Cooking dinner for the kids
 Teaching a classroom of students with wide eyes
 Building houses
 Being behind a mahogany bar as a bartender hearing sweet and ugly
 drunken truths.
 You forget the feel of real clothes
 Fresh cotton, wool, silk and even fucking polyester
 The air smacking your open ass in your new uniform
 your johnny
 So weary and weak
 You don't bother to cover yourself anymore.
 Because of this you must eat baby food again
 have to learn to chew again and
 Swallow
 Without dying
 while you crave the beef stew that
 your beloved made with a side of rye bread.
 We people like I become your new family because you cannot see
 that grandchild
 with the red curls
 And pink lips
 And upturned nose
 Or that beautiful ebony little girl
 That your daughter tried so hard to have
 And she looks
 Just like you
 And your wife
 That died 79 days ago from this beast.
 Without u
 That would not exist
 Without your sperm
 legacy and you.
 The halls as you learn to walk again no longer smell like death
 Or shit
 Or putrid urine
 Because you have been there so long
 These halls now
 smell like home.
 After seven months
 And after put into a medically induced coma
 And turned upside down
 In a diaper
 And rotated like a rotisserie human the whole time

A human will
Reverted back to infancy
In rehab
You have come so far
You sit up on you own but weak and learn
About how life went on..
Your son got discharged from the military
Your youngest daughter got eloped to that guy you never liked
Your first granddaughter died from leukemia
Your wife had a biopsy and started preparing divorce papers because
the idea of being a caregiver
was all too much
The house you built went up for sale because of the medical bills
And your eldest son killed himself
In his garage
With a tube in his mouth
Looking at pictures of you.
cause he thought you wouldn't live
and he
Loved you
That much.
Later..
After rehab because of I
And doctors and staff and the team
And because you fought to make it
For them
And you know nothing
Because you were not to be upset
And keep in mind we never knew the progression of these deviations
because we were focused on you.
You are wheeled out
On a Wednesday
At 3:45
Staff like I with balloons and music
Clapping
We dressed you as you wished
Dress shoes and real underwear and no diapers
And a dress shirt
Teal green
and even a tie
Red with flowers
And pleated pants
And brown shoes
You tied your own laces
And you wanted me to untie them again to show your family
That you can do it
How you could do it.
As we open the sliding doors
The blast of organic earth and fresh air hit your face
we have ten balloons

And you look amazing and so happy
And we wait
And wait
And there is not
One person.
But a housekeeping person
That says
“You made it man”
You clench your jaw
I clench my rage
And send you into the abyss.

—*Julia Kanno*

PLAGUE SONNET XVII

NEAR MISS

I thought I’d got it—flutterings in the chest
each time I breathed, a tender throat, dry nose.
These aren’t the signs they usually suggest
we’re watchful for—but then, who really knows?
And all for being too polite, a fool
to please my friends by eating out inside—
sweet prey that air-conditioned molecules
could feast upon, grow fat and subdivide.

But then, as quickly as it came, it went;
fortune bestowed a smile, then scowled elsewhere,
conceding me the time I’d underspent
and not demanding—yet—I cash her share.
So on I go, where many came to grief;
in funds, yet with the conscience of a thief.

—*Derek Healy*

IN THE PROVINCES

In the summer in Wellfleet
the sun assumes his throne.
Mornings, the kettle ponds shimmer.
Pitch pines admire their reflection
from the banks. We watch
an osprey catch a perch
to feed her chicks before
we immerse ourselves
in the cool water.

In other towns *far far away*
the virus goes room to room
through nursing homes
separating souls from bodies.
In another county, it invades a prison
emptying hundreds of cells.

The virus needs a drink at a bar after a hard day
working the line at the meatpacking plant.
The virus decides to post an ad in the personals:
Loves to party and hang out with friends!
Loves beach blanket bingo!

Corona does want you to know
that you have the right to do
whatever you want
as long as you're willing to host...

Meanwhile, in Wellfleet, we'll keep to ourselves,
wait for the "All Clear!"
before we return
to the world we once knew.

—*Ed Meek*

VISITATION

A new morning fumbles too the lack
of hospital beds, emergency intubations
multiplied like gravel, like rain

thicker than fresh-poured sidewalks.
Two days ago, the community
center fed and clothed 700 people.

The news said *American crisis*, and it sounded like
the reporter used the singular, when, nine months
in, we are surely at the status of plural.

How *crises* evokes the weight of deep bodies
of blue: the Mediterranean, the Bering. Not quite
an ocean, but, if the mask fits. If the bell rings.

A hand stretches to answer the door,
but only after the owner of that hand counts
to herself, making sure the delivery man has left,

taking his air with him.

She recalls the last time
she went for a run: clear skies a deceit,
distraction from the now common rhyme

of ambulance, ambulance, update. She rounded a bend
on the trail, coming along a cord of oak and maple,
when a hawk landed not far from her. It settled

its talons on dry spurts of grass. She dwells
on the many-colored coat of feathers. How it turned
its head to face her. It spread its wings,

a catch of sun. The light, then.

—*Tara Ballard*

TOUCH SCREENS

Our married daughters and grandchildren
live only a few miles away,
but these days, in the time of COVID,
it could be hundreds or thousands of miles.
We see them and talk to them by computer,
and there are no hugs, no touch of any kind.
I wish technology were such
that I could reach my hand through the screen
and caress a cheek.

Decades ago, when we relied on the telephone
for conversations at a distance,
a grandmother asked my young nephew for a kiss.
Came the disbelieving reply,
“What, through the phone??”

I wonder how many smudged lip prints
mark today’s laptop screens.

—*Keith Tornheim*

PANDEMIC HAIR

Rapunzel, that waif, had nothing on these
honeyed hanks, this café-au-lait cascade,
my mermaid's mane in every shade of...

okay, brown, but a *nice* brown, with precious-
metal glimmers here and there, Mother
Nature's highlights. Longer than at any time

since my girlhood, the strands love a braid,
rock a ponytail (high or low), construct
an awe-inspiring topknot. But mostly

I wear it loose, in freefall, an accumulated
cumulonimbus of time, a yardstick
of how long I've been indoors. And I'm tired

of my tower. Nightly in my nest of tresses,
I dream of the raised chair, the scissor snick,
the gentle gossip, the long-borne burden lifted.

—*Laura Cherry*

WINDOW SHOPPING

June 2020

The bridal gowns are all arrayed
side by side on mannequins—
ballgowns, empires, some sequined,
some of flowing silk moire'.

Dreams of ballrooms, chandeliered,
her family waltzing round the floor,
unreel in windows of the store.
She's standing outside. *It's so weird,*

being forced to shop this way,
she thinks. She snaps some photographs.
People walk by wearing masks;
they stare at her, the dress display.

She pictures standing by her groom
wearing that long veil of lace.
He's raising it to kiss her face
...in an almost empty room.

—*Priscilla Turner Spada*

INSIDE THE BELL JAR

under the glass
dome, that is my home
life moves as the wind around
me. But I can't catch

a breeze. I see a woman
racing after children. Children
chasing mirages, looking like
mosaic collages. The colors all

run, the crimson and the marigold,
the azure unrolled. I hear the laughter
of boys pursuing girls. As I stand
inside my silence it deafens me—

their reverie.

—*Sandra Wylie*

ULYSSES DISCOVERS HE'S HOMELESS

In this fractured second just before my plunge
which comes the moment all this talking ceases,

shipwreck is not as gruesome as Poseidon says:
oneness with the world is also oneness with its pain,

unless I haven't really reached that state of grace,
but it feels so real, so real, it feels so *here and now*

all these jumpers screaming into ever-present
as they tumble through the air to gravid earth

and capture blunted glimpses of an ancient wall
pockmarked by arrows, contemplating black-soaked sky

and thermal plains that meet the distant clouds
farther than the eye can see, beyond the sea

to where I used to run my haptic maneuvers,
eyes closed, through a sleep of reason, easy love

and tawdry mementos of wisemen consulting with smoke
and all that blah, blah, blah Poseidon likes to say,

so much a fickle wind, so much the girl who drugged me
with the dizzy vision of an end to craving,

so much the night we dreamed we pierced each other's dream,
I into hers, she into mine, but arriving in her dream

at the moment she arrived in mine I missed her,
so much the day I parted from her for the war,

a week or two at most about to last a lifetime,
we traced a flight of golden leaf to frozen pond

falling freely as jumpers do, into the persistent pain
of fear and mediocrity, theirs and mine and both

in flight towards home, expecting welcome,
the mountains of my childhood coming into view,

changeless like the dead, my childhood's patchwork slopes
above the twisting specks and flaming arrows, dissolving into sky

that's swarming ever closer, closer, closer, never touching, never touched.

—*Marc Jampole*

ANOTHER CHANCE

Inspired by Gilbert Alfred Franklin's sculpture Orpheus Ascending

Soundlessly, Hermes and Eurydice return to Hades
across from RISD Museum.
Orpheus, naked and aghast,
left hand gripping his lyre,
gasps in open-mouthed horror
as she departs
and he loses her a second time.
They move in bronze
on Benefit St.,
atop a sloping palm frond.
For the entrance to the underworld
is in Providence,
near a place Lovecraft, forlorn,
walked shivering at night,
not far from the granite Athenaeum library
where Poe courted the poet Sarah Helen Whitman
and borrowed *Stanley: Or, Recollections of a Man of the World*.
In the capital of the smallest state
lies passage to the abode of those
who have passed from this world.
If one walks in the cold
between midnight and dawn,
it is still possible to stand lonesome in that spot,
to watch the three faintly lit figures move,
and to remember:
bad things happen when we look back.

—*Shai Afsai*

WHAT DANTE LEARNED

one sin is enough, a mistake,
you can try not to make

again, you feel charred
The torture within yourself

a special place in hell
Dark. Dismal. Demented.

The world an illusion means nothing.
Something cannot be something else.

Spare ye such pain a la Beatrice
who arrived too late, such a non-lesson

St. Lucia seemed
to prompt her along.

and the Simonists, you scold,
to learn or burn, the takeaway

you are exactly where
you are supposed to be, Lucifer,

your insurgence squashed
by the many learned souls.

—*Timothy Gager*

BURNT OUT

When I was young
they said I was smart.
I thought myself a
child of Athena.
Wise beyond my years,
an old soul.
Old souls wither fast,
break like dried petals
past season. They
become flammable.
Sometimes they burn.
I don't remember the flame.

Is there a god of wasted potential?
Maybe I could pray to them instead.
Offer up my jaded wisdom and rotting
leaves, take them from me please.
I'm offering you up my mind. It used
to be sharp, but it's dulled over time.
It's yours if you want it.

I'm calling out to you now,
O mighty god of wasted potential.
Accept my atrophied youth, it's all
I have. I can't find Athena anywhere
and my armor does not shine
like Hers.
Be gentle with me. Please.

—*Rianon Prushinski*

**STONE SOUP TO CITY LIGHTS:
JACK POWERS ON LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI**

(This excerpt originally published in Poesy Magazine in 2000)

Jack Powers was the founder of Stone Soup Poets, a venue of readings and publishing in the Boston and Cambridge area for over thirty years. He provided a space for open poetry readings from poets from all walks of life. He also published poetry books for a variety of known and unknown poets, including Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who is considered the spiritual godfather of the Beat Poetry Movement on the west coast in the 1950's.

Jack visited Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who just recently died, in San Francisco where he was still running City Light Books. City Lights, the first all paperback bookstore, was founded by Ferlinghetti in 1953. Shortly after, Ferlinghetti formed a publishing house, creating his renowned Pocket Poet Series. Among the poets he published were Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Jack Kerouac, Dianne DiPrima, to name just a few. In 2000, I spoke with Powers about his recollections and his then-recent meeting with this legendary poet.

Doug Holder (DH): Jack, you have told me more than once that Lawrence Ferlinghetti brought you back to poetry. What is it about the man that drew you to him?

Jack Powers (JP): I think people of my generation were scared into a stasis in post-war America. I was turned on to Ferlinghetti when I read one of his books from the Pocket Poet Series, *Howl and other Poems*, by Allen Ginsberg. I came across it in a little bookstore at the corner of Mass Ave and Huntington in Boston. In the late 50's, I went out to San Francisco with a dear friend and discovered Ferlinghetti's City Lights Bookstore. I didn't actually meet Ferlinghetti until 1975. I was attracted to Ferlinghetti's poetry because it was written in the vernacular; he wrote about "high" things in the common tongue. Now in his 80's, he is still a very formidable presence. I feel he will be recognized as a great poet in his own right, beyond his role as a guru of the Beat Movement.

DH: Ferlinghetti, along with Peter Martin, launched the first all-paperback bookstore in 1953, and later formed a publishing house, starting with their Pocket Poet Series in 1955. Was your own publishing house, Stone Soup Publishing, modeled after Ferlinghetti's and Martin's efforts?

JP: It was impossible not to be influenced by something so beautiful. When I went out to Frisco and City Lights, I loved the feel of Grant Street (home of City Lights) and the crazy people. When I say "crazy" I mean the label that mainstream society gave them. Here were these creative people spreading their wings amidst the stifling conformity of 1950's America. The energy that came from that little bookstore in North Beach was inspiring. Ferlinghetti kept his "tire in track," simply put: he didn't kill himself with booze and drugs, like so many others. Kerouac, for instance, drank himself to distraction and died in his 40's. Ginsberg bathed in the Ganges and was a master of histrionics. Ferlinghetti remained the solid core. Ferlinghetti was and is the model of the sober, committed artist. People could depend on him. He was the co-founder of the Beat Movement, but he was solidly planted, like a tree. Every time I see Ferlinghetti I feel born again, flushed with new energy.

DH: Ferlinghetti published Ginsberg's *Howl*. You published Ferlinghetti's *Jack of Hearts*. Were there any similarities between the books?

JP: Ferlinghetti publishing *Howl* was a very natural development. He even wrote a poem, "The Dog," in his book *Coney Island of the Mind* that was based on the poetical persona of Ginsberg:

The Dog trots freely in the street
and sees reality
and the things he sees
are bigger than himself
and the things he sees are his reality
Drunks in doorways
moons on trees

I believe Ferlinghetti and Ginsberg belong together. Like two dogs, they walked the street and wrote about the stark reality...the wino, the aging drag queen, the ethereal shine of the moon on a tree. They were both living question marks, searching for a common truth.

DH: During your trip to the coast you told me that Ferlinghetti showed you the cottage that he let Kerouac use to dry out and concentrate on his writing. Describe the setting, the feeling, the sense of place or presence there.

JP: I remember touching the desk Kerouac did his writing on. I wondered how many words flowed from here. How incredibly privileged I was to be there. I followed a nearby creek to the Pacific. I stood in the ocean and said: "Thank you, I understand." Just like the creek, we start out as a mere trickle and make that universal passage to the sea, the world at large, the cosmos, what have you. The shore puts you in contact with constant reality, like a heartbeat.

After I got back to Boston, I had the most remarkable thing happen: I saw my own aura around my arms and legs. I feel Kerouac gave me this gift.

DH: Ferlinghetti is in his 80's now and you are in your 60's. Will you be able to carry the torch for him?

JP: I feel that I have to continue to carry the torch. I owe Lawrence for teaching me that each individual life means something. You don't have to be a Yale Younger Poet in order to say something. Lawrence believes as I do, that Americans are too into titillation; they don't read things that challenge them. I think the idea of producing challenging art forms is a common goal.

VAN GOGH PAINTS LA NUIT ETOILEE

paint darkness over the Rhone
let orange subside in sunset
float jazz notes in the distance
rising from a dance hall
let the big dipper beckon

illuminate the city with gas lights
rippling like diamonds on the water
make it tranquil on the riverbank
place a bent couple arm in arm
making their way across the canvas

approaching the edge
but before stepping off
let the couple blend
into the blue notes
rising into the starry night

—*Molly Lynn Watt*

SYMPHONY FOR PIPES

An orchestra tuning up,
a plink, a hiss, a rattle,
reassuring morning sounds,
the boiler firing musically.

I listen to its singing
warming up, lilting.
my creaking house
humming a hymn to heat

—*Triona McMorrow*

YES, SOMETIMES

Sometimes Creation crowds your mind:
the idea that it happened and here you are,
thinking, therefore being. Your eyes
follow the course of a little red wagon rolling
down the driveway into traffic. Your kid
abandoned it thoughtlessly, and you watch
how it goes, and goes. It's all
part of Creation, you're thinking, and things
that must happen will happen, who are you
to interfere. Yet you sprint in a panic
and nearly succeed in aborting its meeting
with the gleaming front end of old Crowley's
new Cadillac, which fate had ushered
so close to the safety of his driveway. Hell
being so normally pent, so restrained
between polite neighbors, it's moments
like this when all hell breaks loose. Crowley
slowly unfolds from his Caddy, works his
creaking bones to a slightly hunched posture
of astonished woe. "Daddy," your kid shrieks,
"Mister Crowley smushed my wagon."
Now's where Creation earns its keep:
The Caddy's unscathed, the wagon in
various pieces, and only the child is bereft.
The elder shakes hands with the older elder
and both turn sad eyes on the boy,
who continues to shriek. "It's all part of
Creation, son," you tell him soothingly, "we're
all responsible for our little red wagons."
The shriek rises to unbearable decibels.
"I'll buy you a new one, laddie," old Crowley says.
With peace on earth for now in sight,
Creation settles for the faux solution.

—*Tomas O'Leary*

THE FLY IN THE OINTMENT

I.

There's nothing like chasing that ball
and even though I was a fat little kid,
so fat I couldn't squeeze under the gate
that guarded the softball field in Lions Park
but had to climb over the top and drop,
bounced blubber, on the ground—
even though I was a pudgy player, when
Gary hit that magnificent fly ball, I chased
that orb, timed my jump perfectly, and
caught it two inches over the fence.

Robbed as he was, Gary dropped his bat
and came after me; but Gary was older
and even fatter than me. I outran him—
circled the outfield, then the bases,
until he tired. I still hear the smack in
my glove and feel the sphere's weight
in my left hand, smell that Rawlings
leather—the aroma of summer.

II.

The next summer, when I was twelve,
Frank Hanken, our own Charlie Hustle,
the scrappiest ballplayer in our neighborhood,
did the dirty in the home team dugout
with Cherie, or Jeanie, or Kathy—I can't
remember. I do recall they were both
chewing gum when they dropped under
the dugout benches and have always
wondered whether they spit it out
or chewed on Mr. Wrigley during
their entire double play? Frank's homer
that day, was a game-changer, a career-ender.
We never snuck into that field again.

—*Charlie Brice*

A DYING BREED

We are a dying breed, ha, ha.
In our last decades, wheezing our last hurrahs,
an extinction, a cohort hurtling—
but hey, let's not hurry it.

I could, in a breezy metaphor,
say, we bob about in a bark,
or ark, some two by two, most one by one,
tiny and fragile, on a rageous sea,
until we strike our Ararat and alight
into whatever afterworld there may be.

In a more grounded metaphor,
put it, our mundane batch of buildings on a green hillside,
high enough above the river that,
in our lifetime (ha, ha) no once-in-a-century flood
will swamp us like the tide of history, wave by wave,
rolling on, over us, past us, into the future of our offspring—

A dying breed. Well-bred, well-mannered,
by our own lights well-intentioned,
cultured like the wine, patè, whisky,
as close to our hearts as our pharmacist,
we go toward the inescapable night insisting—

A dying breed. We do the carpet-walk
in the corridor canyons, pale yellow,
covered with our wired fraught art.
We dance the Do-Not-Vegetate, do
the Do-NOT-Sit, the Uppa-Off-Ass, do
bridge, pilates, Italian, the Faith Group, ping ping, pong pong,
smiling, nodding, helpful—

A dying breed. We hew to our habits, old-fashioned
as the cocktail, Latin, slide rule, penmanship, the waltz, memorizing poetry,
and when they say,
“last century,” as if I were an old horse pasturized,
I cry, *No!* I am not so different than I ever was
under the big sky, on a road stretching out ahead,
perhaps far ahead, or not, who knows? and disappearing into the haze—
one of a dying breed.

But hey, let's not hurry it.

—*Llyn Clague*

TIKKUN OLAM*

Summon the *Mitzvot Makers*,
Valiant Earth shakers,
Doers of dynamic deeds—
Earth doctors who dispense
Healing remedies to resuscitate
An ailing world sustained
On intravenous drip.

Unfurl your banners and pennants.
Call forth your valorous forces.
Nations yearn for your therapies and cures.
Line up your ranks, ready your roused battalions.
General Mammon has bridled the haggard stallions.
The Four Horsemen are mounted and lead the rampant hordes:
Polluters, despoilers and grasping greed merchants.
Peal the alarm! To arms!

The marred Earth has splintered into myriad fragments.
Her wounds moan in plaintive reproof.
Staunch the bleeding, launch the repair!
Bring your potent, restorative vials.
Work your science; prepare your curative plants.

You are the instruments, the menders,
Sewing the sutures with sureness,
Leave no scars as the patient heals.
Humankind hovers near the verge,
Outcome far from certain;
However, sanguine prognosis surmises
That the convalescent will endure.

May a rainbow curtain rise on a not-too-distant dawn
That will break into a holy, renewed at oneness.
Let us be vigilant as we diligently sow the seeds
Needed for the Globe to thrive with a regeneration of deeds
That nurture the surge for Tikkun Olam.

—*Harris Gardner*

**Tikkun Olam: a Jewish concept of World repair—healing the world with positive deeds.*

ON THE LEFT BANK

Le Chat Qui Peche felt chilly and damp
to French, Swiss and all listeners'
hands and bones. Loud, nodding jazz on air
spread to the gargoyles of Notre Dame
on its dissolving path to the Paris sky.

Down in that small cramped cave
with backless benches
he did those trills, ripples, muffled dark tones
and high-speed runs
which pinched your nerves and made your
body move.
Nearby, vaseline, him and the three horns
formed the familial five.

In the summertime of a decade gone by
on a warm, gentle breeze blow July night
Curson/Murray/Potts filled the room
with trumpet, flugelhorn, piccolo, saxophone
and drums on the count of one
sped off each into a journey of their own
flaunting nearly nude notes
singing sad, loud, be-bop blues tunes.

Most meridians have heard his band
and the Pori Festival of Finland/ gone sixteen
years.

Close-by fans have felt the softness of his 3-
piece black leather dress and faintly sniffed
his oriental hard-to-find Abano.
Twenty-two disks go round
flamboyantly flaunting his sounds.
In the summertime of a decade gone.

—*J.L. McRath*

SABBATH QUEEN

I think of Rebecca, my Cambridge friend
fifteen years older, with whom I was quite taken.
She took me to synagogue once,
on a mellow and cool June evening
days before my birthday;
and again, on Erev Shabbat during Chanukah.
I fell in love with Judaism
through my affection for her.

I remember the way that Rabbi Himmel,
attractive woman of sixty, pronounced *Chanukah*:
with the gentlest initial *chet*,
and with a very clear "oo" on the middle syllable.

I looked for books so I could learn the basics.
I found a Reform *siddur* for four dollars at Rodney's.
I was magnetized by the poem-prayers
of Alden Solovy and Debbie Perlman.
I swooned for the music of Aviva Chernick.
I bought any Jewish title
that contained the word *Healing*.
I even picked up a volume called *Buber for Dummies*.

I thought about learning Hebrew,
but the alphabet proved an obstacle.
I sympathize with Nurse Hannah
(Chana Ariel), whom I met when I went in
for gallbladder surgery:
she pulled out all the stops
to get me the sacraments, just in case,
and when I said she could pray
a *mi shebeirach* for me
if the priest was too busy,
she protested, "I can't!
I flunked out of Hebrew school!"

I loved Rabbi David Goldfarb's Zoom seminar
"Introduction to Judaism."
He told us about the *Shekinah*,
a way of thinking about feminine attributes
of divinity. There were a few light touches.
He shared a Far Side cartoon
depicting the Almighty (scowling old greybeard
of popular imagination) at His computer,
finger poised above a SMITE button.

I need to ask my friend Rachel
if she'd be willing to let me tag along
if she's planning to attend services.
I'd love to try again to sing the hymn
that welcomes the Sabbath Queen.

—*Thomas DeFreitas*

RACE IS JUST A STORY

In the alley or lewd casino
 every game its dealer
Every story its teller
 in caves, in cotton fields,
on playing fields, while ploughing fields,
 In ice storms, dust storms,
monsoons, typhoons

fictions:
 the shape of your head,
 the meaning of your lips,
 the curl the color the kink the lank
 the sun the cold the light the dark

Race is just a story,

But because of it:
 The shackle, the whip
 The brand, the noose
 The bullet
 Endless songs of mourning rising
 Like soft smoke in the evening sky

Race is just a story.

Every story its teller
 every salt tear tastes the same.

—*Michael Ansara*

SHOWER

Did they speak when they went in
thinking they were only going
to get clean? Trying to shake off
the residue of last night's dream
while I shower to wake up, I dimly
sense murmuring fear no words
just sounds jumble of voices.
Did they have a chance for farewells
before Zyklon B silenced language?

I need this memory—a long ago
time in deep summer, the trees
outside the bathroom window
in full leaf, sunshine plashing
on the bright tiles, the water warm,
plentiful. I luxuriate in my body,
making it clean to meet my lover,
the shower a prelude to adventure
not annihilation.

—*Karen Klein*

BACTERIA BLUE

His note on aqua paper looks
like collapsed Morpho wings
crumpled in my fist

rage held too long
no way to blame
cosmic imbalance

or Stygian star-blink
for this fire hot enough
to burn a thousand pages

but something chills
the blaze of memory
time to toss this casserole

of spoiled romance
recipe from a fancy cookbook
turned moldy bacteria blue.

—*Nina Rubinstein Alonso*

BURN

the fucked thing
that no one tells you
about loving a liar
is how her rouge will look while you wipe it off of her round cheeks.
the cold air doesn't faze her,
her insides are warm and her eyes flutter about the space
like your rapid breath is moving them.

the nights are long.
longer now too.
you wait up for hours,
she tells you her stories;
the ones she's scared of.
the ones with crinkled gold foil
and counterfeit coins.
her eyes sparkle.
she spits loose teeth,
her gums are bloody and red.
"did you miss me?" she says.

i don't want to force you to talk to me
with the back of my hand.
i don't want to force you to love me
from the back of your heart.

i want you to want to talk to me.
i want you to run to me
sprint with full force and mean every step.
because i've screamed down alleys for you
heard the bitter echo on those concrete walls,
felt the ripple of blood as it leapt over my teeth.

some nights i see a glint in your eyes.
something glimmering and bouncing in your golden irises.
i pray that it's me.
that it's my reflection.
it's not though.
it's the moon
or it's the ducks in the water
or some other coincidence.

i want you from a place deep down.
in the fiber of my being.
from behind my heartstrings.
a place that i hate.
i know i shouldn't.

i know i can't.
but those evenings where you've settled in,
i swear i'm shimmering in your eyes.

—*Koby Hirschaut*

TARE WEIGHT

I was thirty-three that June
when I came home for harvest
and rode with you in your father-in-law's
beat-up International—shotgun
on a late-night, last-run haul
to the Farmers Co-Op,
where the two of us had shoveled
wheat in our teens and early twenties.

After weighing in and dumping
our load in the elevator's south pit,
we weighed out, drove the six miles east
to Renners' place without speaking,
my gut empty as the old truck—
the gnaw of knowing I'd leave
before dawn, get back on the road
I'd chosen ten years before.

You pulled into the round-top,
killed the engine. We clambered out,
scuffed through dust
to my rental car, shook hands.

And I left. For a moment, though,
at the edge of the county blacktop,
when I rolled down my window
and the wind began to stir,
when I smelled dew rising
from the eighty yet to be cut,
when I looked into the great black sky
and every star summoned me back,
I damn near turned around.

—*Justin Hunt*

IN CIRCLES

*my thoughts revolve
around my neck
like a globe
pounding in each cell
of my accordionic brain*

*i hear the echo of my voice
mumbling again and again:
 everything . . . is so hot
 nothing . . . is left
 all . . . an impasse*

*i feel inside
logs burning cracking
red like their brutal kindness
when we used to brew
the lines of Les Fleur du Mal
de Baudelaire;
when I used to walk
the squares of Verona
waiting for the sound of
your breathless cobblestoned soul
that reached me with the coldness
of your distant closeness;
when I used to dream
about that new path
still possible between you and me
and even maybe those the broken humans*

*i only hear the echo of my voice
a murmur a bell of winding ascent
where? when? by whom?
in this desolate deserted ancestry
repeating again and again:
 everything . . . is so hot
 even the mirage is withering . . .
 nothing . . . is left
 all . . . an impasse*

—Beatriz Alba del Rio

DO YOU COLLECT JOYS AND SORROWS?

On the street corner a dancer spins, a busker twirls
His rainbow of plates and a man in battle gear
Watches, trigger hand poised.

If you see something, say something...

Confusion, construction on weekends, which
Train, which street goes where? No one to ask, but
A tired dog and his man. Walk south
And there under scaffolding
In the midst of jack hammers, backing-up dings is
The Café where overhead fans caress, calm
At the center, and one or two can be content, alone
Quite safe to wander the twists of heart or mind.

In the café the tables are full of talk of tiny
Rooms that would suit, of fear
That kills, of the raggedy man. There
In the midst of spiders, dust and old bones,
Lie their dreams. When he claps
Three times, they will rise up
Singing: *Toe bone connected to the foot
Bone; foot bone connected to the heel bone;
Heel bone connected to the leg bone; leg bone...*
All night the beat goes Thumpity Thump,
Thump, Thump, as they rise up singing
To dance round the tables and out the door.
Do you search between the dark and the dark?

—*Molly Mattfield Bennett*

SURVIVAL GUIDE

*After the New York Times Square sound art installation
by Max Neuhaus at Broadway and 7th*

When the back-to-belly buffing numbs your libido
at the sight of a woman wearing only a guitar
strapped over nipples and crotch
When heat of her “Slow Burn” drowns
in a circus of surround sound
When skyscrapers become a Big Top
alive in digital discord and fireworks of flashing lights
that folds into itself like the theater discount line
And you spin in the merry-go-round of it all

Stumble off and onto Broadway’s center sidewalk grid
Stand over the low drone from the subway vent
Let the hum become an Ommmmmm meditation
A drift on the F major monotone
with a kaleidoscope of fall leaves
To the rocking chair of an ocean
The cleansed air from whoosh of waves
A prairie sweet-grass scent after rain
Tune-in to a meadowlark’s six-note eulogy
A suck of celebration on a honeycomb
Surrender in the deep South
to the soft hands of cotton in its boll

As the hum becomes a John Cage kind of silence
A Quiet Circus of mindfulness

—*Ellaraine Lockie*

WINGLESS BIRDS ON BARE BRANCHES

Calendars gone mad, skipping weeks and months landing in December
on Park Place where you have to pay rent on the pile of hotels.

Time belongs not to a vestigial god, but to a tatted magician in dreads, pulling
rabbits from his top hat, making time disappear down his sock or into his sleeve
whatever time is lost is owned by death

while we wait in suspense, perched on our folding chairs. Only time doesn't
reappear, and the magician moves on, sawing the scantily clad woman in half.

My face a knot of frustration no one notices, all too busy counting their stacks
of neon orange five hundred dollar bills, while I stare at my three pallid dollars.
go directly to jail, do not pass go

I thought I would live forever, not really forever, but forever enough.
We tossed clothes on the floor at Peck & Peck, never intending to buy anything.

We were queens of the world unaware of the denizens paid minimum wage.
I eat dark chocolate from cocoa beans macheted by children in Cameroon.
denial is our best defense

I am obsessed with fixing things: the kink in the hose, the blown fuse, the stuck
window. I stack plates in perfect piles, line up coffee cups like sentinels.
like crows caught in our cellars

Can I squeeze a little more from my tube of Tom's,
mend my paper and string life with a glue gun from Amazon?
put a wafer on my tongue

Memories float away in the slip stream of my walker. Time unspools
without mercy, beyond the reach of magic or holy water.
I hear the dice roll
I need to pray harder

— Claire Scott

ALMOST ORPHANED AT THE PIER

Mom plunged down. We shrieked like gulls—
Dad dove and disappeared below.
We kids pressed against the gunwales

then threw cushions from the bow,
and over starboard, port and stern,
till none were left aboard somehow.

But something we had yet to learn—
our red squares followed tide and flow,
passing cormorants in turn,

far from Mom, who surfaced now.
Dad soon appeared and reached for her,
helped her crawl aboard. And how

we rescued all the floats? A blur.
And us? We felt too amateur.

—*Paulette Demers Turco*

CHEST

A ripple on the lake

I who'd drifted return

My chest is still awake

A bleary double take—

The mind is not alone

It ripples in some wake

The limbs show up and ache

They disappear in turn

My chest beats on, awake

The covers roll and sink

Beneath, a quiet churn

A creature in the lake

It wouldn't help to look

There's nothing there to learn

Only my chest awake

Whose watch fire mutters, banked

(Morning might see it burn)

Its stipple on the lake

Arrests me, still awake

— *David Donna*

KOAN

What is the sound of one hand clapping, friend?
We know there is no sound from just one hand,
Yet meaning's there somewhere around the bend,
Small grains of truth that slip away like sand.

Zen Masters have the answers but prefer
Their students strive to think outside the box
And sweat and rack their brains and not defer
To those whose eyes may narrow like a fox.

The students learn that language is not the way
To reach their goal of true enlightenment
And suffer painful blows if they should say
That words can lead us to the firmament.

In fact, our words obstruct the holy path,
Because the thoughts that form them are produced
In human brains that may excel in math
But cannot grasp an unseen force unloosed.

To put it simply, we can't comprehend
The realm of spirit through intellect alone.
Our words arise from matter, not intent,
And meditation sets the perfect tone.

But koans vex the human brain, as thought
Should be the way to open up the locks
To Asian riddles, but all for naught,
As words again conceal the paradox.

We must accept that words are the enemy
And our thoughts just blocks to satori's bliss.
If you are seeking pathways to be free,
Then turn to action as the key you missed.

Now think of this: Our Asian students call,
Frustrated, flustered, and prepared to leave,
Until one day the most perplexed of all
Has had enough of riddles Masters weave.

"What is the sound of one hand clapping, Son?"
The Master sits and waits for the response.
Our young man's monastery life is done.
Without a thought, he moves his fist at once.

His fist outstretched, his mind on dire intent,

He sees his fingers bend and then unclench,
And there before him is one palm unbent.
No sound is heard that might his spirit quench.

His anger fades. He breathes and views the palm,
The riddle solved, remembering the trials
That tested him but taught him to be calm.
He bends his head and bows. The Master smiles.

—*David L. Arnett*

A CUP OF CHAMOMILE TEA

Maybe I'll just stay in bed with you,
I'll skip ethics and psychology, and instead
put a kettle on the stove and watch you steam
slow and soft, white mist to vacant air.
Maybe I'll meditate to your gentle whisper,
breathe you in, clear my lungs and thoughts
back to pure. You're comforting to me;
you're warm and cozy, usually reliable
with a little milk, and a lot of honey,
sweet enough, but still strong, not diluted.
I'd lay with you forever if I could,
with a fuzzy blanket, and nowhere
to be for at least a few more hours.
Sometimes, I forget about you,
I get distracted or fall back asleep,
but I know you'll always be right where I left you,
now lukewarm and waiting for my return
to feel my lips meet yours in the morning.

—*Jenna Nicole Gleason*

WRITERS' BIOS—SPRING, 2021

Shai Afsai (shaiiafsai.com) lives in Providence, Rhode Island. In addition to short stories and poems, his recent writing has focused on Benjamin Franklin's influence on Jewish thought and practice, and on the works of the contemporary Dublin author Gerry McDonnell. Afsai's writing has been published in *Anthropology Today*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Journal of the American Revolution*, *Poetica*, *Review of Rabbinic Judaism*, *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, and *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*.

Kathleen Aguero's latest book of poetry is *After That*. Her collection *Night Sky* is forthcoming from Tiger Bark Press. She has also published nonfiction in *The Tower Journal* and *Solstice Literary Magazine*. She teaches in the low-residency Solstice M.F.A. in creative writing and conducts creative writing for caregivers workshops privately and through adult and community education centers.

Nina Rubinstein Alonso's work has appeared in *Ploughshares*, *The New Yorker*, *Writing in a Woman's Voice*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *MomEgg*, *Sumac*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Nixes Mate*, etc. Her book *This Body* was published by David Godine Press. Her chapbook *Riot Wake* is forthcoming from Cervena Barva Press, and a story collection is in the works.

Michael Ansara Michael Ansara spent many years as an activist and an organizer. He is the co-founder of Mass Poetry. He currently serves on the Executive Committee of the New Movement to Redress Racial Segregation and the organizing team for Together for 2020. His poems and essays have been published in *Salamander*, *Mid America Poetry Review*, *Web del Sol*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Vox*, *Solstice* and *Arrowsmith*.

Dr. David L. Arnett served as a Foreign Service Officer in the U.S. Information Agency and the U.S. Department of State for over 31 years. Before that, he was an Army officer with service in Viet Nam. He majored in English as an undergraduate at Wabash College (Class of '65) and also holds a Ph.D. in English from Tulane University. He has published two novels (*Messengers*; *The Sea of Cortez*), poetry, one short story ("Polarized State"), and newspaper and journal articles. He was a regular columnist with the nationally distributed *Sedona Monthly* magazine for seven years. His poem "On Patrol" won an Honorable Mention in the national war poetry contest sponsored by Winning Writers. He and his Norwegian-born wife Vivi live in Sedona, Arizona.

Tara Ballard is the author of *House of the Night Watch* (New Rivers Press), winner of the 2016 Many Voices Project prize in poetry. Her poems have been published in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *North American Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Salamander*, *The Southampton Review*, and elsewhere. Her work received a 2019 Nazim Hikmet Poetry Prize. She is currently pursuing her PhD at the University of Nebraska Lincoln

Jennifer Barber's new collection, *The Sliding Boat Our Bodies Made*, is forthcoming from The Word Works in 2022. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in the *Paris Review*, *Lily Poetry Review*, and *Broadsided*, and her books are *Works on Paper* (The Word Works, 2016), *Given Away* (Kore Press, 2012), and *Rigging the Wind* (Kore Press, 2003). She will be poet laureate of Brookline from 2021 to 2024.

Molly Mattfield Bennett has published in several magazines including *Ibbetson Street*, *Constellations*, *Off the Coast*, and *Solstice*. Her first book *Name the Glory* was published by Wilderness House Press, her second *Point-No-Point* was published by FutureCycle Press, and currently *Coffee Shop Philosophy* is looking for a publisher. Molly enjoys being part of the active Boston poetry community.

Charlie Brice is the winner of the 2020 Field Guide Magazine Poetry Contest and is the author of *Flashcuts Out of Chaos* (2016), *Mnemosyne's Hand* (2018), *An Accident of Blood* (2019), and *The Broad Grin of Eternity* (forthcoming), all from WordTech Editions. His poetry has been nominated for the Best of Net Anthology and three times for a Pushcart Prize and has appeared in *The Atlanta Review*, *Chiron Review*, *Pangolin Review*, *The Sunlight Press*, *Sparks of Calliope*, and elsewhere.

Dorian Brooks has two books of poems published, *A Pause in the Light* and *The Wren's Cry*. A retired technical writer, she has written numerous articles for fembio.org, a website specializing in biographies of women. She lives in Arlington, Massachusetts with her husband and two cats.

Mary Buchinger is the author of four collections of poetry, including *e i n f ü h l u n g/in feeling*, *Aerialist* (finalist for the May Swenson Poetry Award, OSU Press Wheeler Prize, and the Perugia Press Prize) and *Navigating the Reach* (forthcoming). President of the New England Poetry Club, she holds a doctorate in linguistics and teaches at MCPHS University in Boston.

Dan Calnan is a writer from Greater Boston. He has a B.A. in English (Creative Writing) from Endicott College. He is the author of a book of poems titled *To Move a Piano* (Ibbetson Street Press, 2018). He previously served as Editor-in-Chief of *The Endicott Review*, which has featured his fiction and poetry. His work has also appeared in *The Mochila Review*, *The Somerville Times*, and *The Daily Item*.

Lauren Camp is the author of five books, most recently *Took House* (Tupelo Press). Her poems have appeared in *Witness*, *Poet Lore*, *Poetry International* and elsewhere. Honors include the Dorset Prize and finalist citations for the Arab American Book Award and the New Mexico-Arizona Book Award. Her poems have been translated into Mandarin, Turkish, Spanish, and Arabic. (www.laurencamp.com)

David Cappella is the co-author of two books on the teaching of poetry: *Teaching the Art of Poetry* (Routledge) and *A Surge of Language* (Heinemann). He won the 2006 Bright Hill Press Poetry Chapbook Award. His book *Gobbo: A Solitaire's Opera* will be published in Spring 2021 by Červená Barva Press and will be published as an Italian bi-lingual edition by *puntoacapo Editrice* in November 2021. Visit his university web site: <http://webcapp.ccsu.edu/?fsdMember=249> Loom Press of Lowell, Massachusetts.

Ruth Chad is a psychologist who lives and works in the Boston area. Her poems have appeared in the *Aurorean*, *Bagels with the Bards*, *Connection*, *Psychoanalytic Couple* and *Family Institute of New England*, *Constellations*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Montreal Poems*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Lily Poetry Review*, *Amethyst Poetry* and several other publications. Her chapbook, *The Sound of Angels*, was published by Cervená Barva Press in 2017.

Laura Cherry is the author of the collection *Haunts* (Cooper Dillon Books) and the chapbooks *Two White Beds* (Minerva Rising) and *What We Planted* (Providence Athenaeum). She co-edited the anthology *Poem, Revised* (Marion Street Press) with Robert Hartwell Fiske, and her work has been published in journals including *Antiphon*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *Los Angeles Review*, *Cider Press Review*, and *DMQ Review*. She earned an MFA from the Warren Wilson Program for Writers. She works as a technical writer and lives near Boston with her son and their cats.

Llyn Clague lives in Sleepy Hollow, New York. His poems have been published widely, including in *Ibbetson Street*, *Atlanta Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *California Quarterly*, *Main Street Rag*, *New York Quarterly*, and other magazines. His eighth book, *Up Close And Nuclear*, was published by Main Street Rag. Visit www.llynclague.com.

Dennis Daly has published seven books of poetry and poetic translations. His last book, *The Devil's Artisan: Sonnets from the Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, was released by Dos Madres in 2020. Visit his blog site at dennisfdaly.blogspot.com.

Thomas DeFreitas was born in Boston in 1969 and graduated from the Boston Latin School. He attended the University of Massachusetts in both Boston and Amherst. His poems have appeared in *Dappled Things*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Light*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Plainsongs*, *Soul-Lit*, and elsewhere. Tom's first chapbook, *Winter in Halifax*, is forthcoming from Kelsay Books in the winter of 2021-22.

Beatriz Alba del Rio is a bilingual poet, novelist, and lawyer. Beatriz' awards: Octavio Paz & Pablo Neruda International Poetry Contests; Cambridge Poetry Awards & Translation prize: New England Poetry Club. Her poetry has appeared in anthologies and literary magazines. Beatriz' muses: Borges, Gelman, Jorie Graham. The late Ottone Riccio is Beatriz' poetry guru. Covid made her belief of "oneness" a surreal reality of brutal kindness and grace.

David Donna's poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Radar Poetry*, *Neologism Poetry Journal*, *Constellations*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *First Literary Review - East*, and the *Somerville Times*. They live in Somerville, MA, where they write software and poetry by turns.

Howie Faerstein is the author of the chapbook *Out of Order* (Main Street Rag) and two full-length collections: *Dreaming of the Rain in Brooklyn* and *Googootz and Other Poems* (Press 53). A five-time Pushcart Prize nominee, he volunteers as a mentor at the Center for New Americans, is co-poetry editor of *CutThroat*, *A Journal of the Arts*, and lives in Florence, Massachusetts.

Timothy Gager is the author of sixteen books of fiction and poetry. His latest, *2020 Poems*, is his ninth of poetry, and was an Amazon #1 Bestseller in five categories. Timothy hosted the successful Dire Literary Series in Cambridge, Massachusetts from 2001 to 2018, and as a virtual series starting in 2020. Timothy was the co-founder of The Somerville News Writers Festival. He has had over 1000 works of fiction and poetry published, of which seventeen have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

Brendan Galvin is the author of eighteen collections of poems. *Habitat: New and Selected Poems 1965-2005* (LSU Press) was a finalist for the National Book Award. *The Air's Accomplice*, a collection of new poems, is available from LSU Press now, as is *Partway to Geophany*. *Egg Island Almanac*, which appeared from Southern Illinois University Press in fall, 2017. He lives in Truro, Massachusetts..

Harris Gardner's credits: *The Harvard Review*; *A Poet's Siddur*; *Constellations*; *Midstream*; *Cool Plums*; *Rosebud*; *Fulcrum*; *Chest*; *Ibbetson Street*; *Vallum* (Canada); and over fifty others. Four poetry collections: *Chalice of Eros*, co-authored with Lainie Senechal; *Lest They Become* (Ibbetson Street); *Among Us* (Cervena Barva Press); *No Time For Death* (forthcoming from Cervena Barva Press). Poetry Editor, *Ibbetson Street*: 2010 to present; co-founder: Tapestry of Voices and Boston National Poetry Month Festival with Lainie Senechal. Recipient of Ibbetson Street Lifetime Achievement Award - 2015. Citation from Massachusetts House of Representatives - 2015.

Danielle Legros Georges' most recent book is *Island Heart* (Subpress Collective, 2021), translations of the poems of Haitian-French writer Ida Faubert. Legros Georges is a Professor of Creative Writing at Lesley University and the Translation Editor of Consequenceforum.org. She was appointed the second Poet Laureate of the city of Boston, serving in the role between 2015 and 2019. For more about her work, visit daniellelegrosgeorges.com.

Jenna Gleason is a senior at Endicott College studying Psychology with a minor in Victimology. She has never taken a poetry class before, but she loves to write. She wrote a book of poetry called *Serendipity* when she was a senior at Westover School and hopes to write another book.

Derek Healy grew up at the foot of the Cotswolds hills and now lives in Malvern UK. He has had two collections published, the latest being *Home* (Graffiti Books, 2020). His poetry has appeared in a number of journals, including *The Lyric*, *Orbis*, *The Road Not Taken* and *The Muddy River Poetry Review*. He has read on several occasions at the Cheltenham Literature Festival.

Koby Hirschaut is a Junior English Major at Endicott College. He is from Peabody Massachusetts. He recently published a short collection of his poetry entitled *left on read*. He has been featured in the “Lyrical Somerville” section of the Somerville Times. He hopes that his writing can give a name to those feelings that people are sometimes unable to define.

Stephen M. Honig is a writer, poet and lawyer. His works include three volumes of poetry (*Messing Around With Words*, *Rail Head* and *Obligatory COVID Chapbook*), and a collection of short stories, *Noir Ain't the Half of It*. Slated for the fall is a poetry collection entitled *Laertes in America*; in winter he anticipates publication of his first novel, a spy thriller.

Justin Hunt grew up in rural Kansas and lives in Charlotte, NC. His work has won several awards and appears (or is forthcoming) in *Five Points*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *Arts & Letters*, *The Florida Review*, *Chautauqua*, *Terrain.org*, *Atlanta Review*, *Bellingham Review*, *Crosswinds Poetry Journal*, *Cider Press Review*, *The Strokestown Poetry Anthology* (Ireland), and *The Bridport Prize Anthology* (U.K.), among other journals and publications.

Marc Jampole wrote *The Brothers Silver* (Owl Canyon Press, 2021), *Music from Words* (Bellday Books, 2007) and *Cubist States of Mind/Not the Cruellest Month* (Poet's Haven Press, 2017). His poems and short stories have appeared in many journals and anthologies. A former television news reporter and public relations executive, Marc writes the OpEdge blog.

Robert K. Johnson, now retired, was a Professor of English at Suffolk University for many years. For eight years, he was also the Poetry Editor of *Ibbetson Street* magazine. His poems have been published in a wide variety of magazines, here and abroad. The most recent collections of his poems are *From Mist to Shadow* and *Choir Of Day*.

Ron A. Kalman's poetry has appeared in *Exquisite Corpse*, *The Main Street Rag*, *The Somerville Times*, *Muddy River Poetry Review* and other publications. His translations of the Hungarian poet Attila József were included in the inaugural edition of *The Exquisite Corpse Annual*. He works as a limo driver in the Boston area.

Julia Kanno is from Appalachia and Botswana. She is an artist and also works in healthcare. She has self-published with her co-pilot, levin feuffer, two books of prose: *a storm is cuming* and *the hardest helmut*. Her first reading was at Northeastern University and since then she has read at the Somerville Armory two times. She gives birth to her works, including those that have been displayed at the De Cordova Museum and Howard University, as well as at local gems such as The Middle East and Out of the Blue gallery.

Lawrence Kessenich has written poetry, plays, novels, screenplays, and essays. He won the 2010 Strokestown International Poetry Prize, and his poetry has been published in *Sewanee Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, and many other magazines. Three of his poems were read on NPR's *The Writer's Almanac* and three nominated for the Pushcart Prize. He has published two chapbooks, *Strange News* and *Pearl*, two full-length books, *Before Whose Glory* and *Age of Wonders*, and a novel, *Cinnamon Girl*. His plays have been performed in Massachusetts, New York, and Colorado. All of his books are available at lawrence-writer.com.

Karen Klein started her second career writing poetry, studying and performing contemporary dance after her retirement from the Brandeis faculty. She has published in print journals and online, most recently in *Constellations*, *The Cape Cod Times*, and *The Bagel Bards Anthology 2020*. Her poems are forthcoming in *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, and *Free Inquiry*, and have been read on radio, choreographed and performed by *teXtmoVes*, a poetry/dance collaborative she founded. A member of Steeple Street Poets, she was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Ted Kooser is, at 82, fully retired from teaching and public appearances but writing every day at his home in rural Nebraska. His most recent collection of poems is a fine letterpress limited printing of *A Suite of Moons*, from Gibraltar Editions in Omaha.

Deborah Leipziger is a poet, author, and advisor on sustainability. Her chapbook, *Flower Map*, was published by Finishing Line Press. Born in Brazil, Ms. Leipziger is the author of several books on sustainability. Twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize, her poems have been published in literary magazines in five countries.

Ellaraine Lockie's work has won Poetry Forum's Chapbook Contest Prize, San Gabriel Valley Poetry Festival Chapbook Competition, Encircle Publications Chapbook Contest, Best Individual Poetry Collection Award from *Purple Patch* magazine in England, and *The Aureorean's* Chapbook Choice Award. She features every Friday for the Weekly Poetry Podcast Poem of the Week at *Chrysanthemum Chronicles*: <https://anchor.fm/chrysanthemum-chronicles>.

Jennifer Matthews' poetry has been published in Nepal by *Pen Himalaya* and locally by the *Wilderness Retreat Writers Organization*, *Midway Journal*, *The Somerville Times*, *Ibbetson Street Press* and *Oddball Magazine*. Jennifer was nominated for a poetry award by the Cambridge Arts Council for her book of *Poetry Fairy Tales and Misdemeanors*. Her songs have been released internationally and her photography has been used as covers for a number of Ibbetson Press books as well as at local restaurants and coffee shops. www.jennifermatthews.com

Eileen McCluskey's poetry has appeared in *Main Street Rag*, on WBUR's Radio Boston, in *Rufous City Review*, *Ibbetson Street*, *6S*, *Haiku Journal*, *Boston College Magazine*, and other publications. Eileen has several micro chapbooks with Origami Poems Project, including the popular *Divorce Haiku*. Her chapbook, *Topless*, was published by Main Street Rag. Eileen is among the poets included in the Wickford Art Association's 2019 collaborative reading and exhibit with poets and painters. She was a finalist in The Poetry Loft 2015 Chapbook Contest, and in the Cambridge Poetry Awards 2012 competition.

Susan Lloyd McGarry has published poetry in small magazines and given readings and workshops in London and Oregon, as well as in the Boston area. Her poems have been anthologized in *The Poetry of Peace* and *Beyond Raised Voices*. Named Bard of the Boston Irish Festival for her poem, "Memory of Coumeenole," she read there to 1000+ people. Until recently she wrote newsletters and ran social media for a center devoted to health and human rights. She now freelances on a limited basis. Former managing editor of the *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, she edited their poetry issue, *The Radiant Imagination*.

Triona McMorrow lives in Dunlaoghaire, County Dublin. She was shortlisted for The International Francis Ledwidge Poetry Competition in 2009, 2011 and 2016, and the Galway University Hospitals Arts Trust poetry competition in 2013. She has been published by *Cyphers* and *North West Words* and has had several poems published in *Ibbetson Street* (Boston). Five of her poems are in the 2014 anthology *Bealtaine*.

J.L. McRath has lived in the South End for more than forty years. Her poems have appeared in *Ideal Woman*, *Nigeria magazine*, and *UMMA*. Her travel articles have been published in *CRISIS* and *Essence*. A 3-part coverage of the historic 1977 FESTAC appeared in the *Bay State Banner*, and a photographic essay was published in *Woman of Power*. She chairs the Theresa-India Young Scholarship Committee, which awards a scholarship in the Fibers Department at Massachusetts College of Art. She is currently researching the life and works of Beat Generation Jazz Action surrealist poet, Ted Joans.

Ed Meek has recently had poems in *Constellations*, *What Rough Beast*, *Poetry Superhighway*, *The American Poetry Journal*. His new book, *High Tide*, is available at Aubadepublishing.com.

David P. Miller's collection, *Sprawled Asleep*, was published by Nixes Mate Books in 2019. His poems have recently appeared in *Meat for Tea*, *The Poetry Porch*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Lily Poetry Review*, *Nixes Mate Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, and *The Telephone Project*. A retired college librarian, he is a member of the Jamaica Pond Poets.

Tomas O'Leary—poet, translator, music-maker, singer, artist and expressive therapist—has a volume of New & Selected Poems from Lynx House Press: *In the Wellspring of the Ear*. His previous books of poetry are *Fool at the Funeral*, *The Devil Take a Crooked House*, and *A Prayer for Everyone*. A teacher for many years—college, high school, elementary, adult ed—he has worked for the past couple decades with folks who have Alzheimer's, playing Irish accordion and eliciting cognitive and emotional responses through songs, stories, poems, and free-wheeling conversation.

Chad Parenteau hosts Boston's long-running Stone Soup Poetry series. His work has appeared in journals such as *Résonancee*, *Queen Mob's Tea-House*, *Cape Cod Poetry Review*, *Tell-Tale Inkings*, *Off The Coast*, *Headline Poetry & Press* and *Wilderness House Literary Review*. He currently serves as Associate Editor of the online journal *Oddball Magazine*. His second collection, *The Collapsed Bookshelf*, was nominated for a Massachusetts Book Award.

Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *Forge*, *Poetry*, *Osiris*, *The New Yorker* and elsewhere. His most recent collection is *The Family of Man Poems* published by *Cholla Needles Arts & Literary Library*, 2021. For more information including free e-books and his essay "Magic, Illusion and Other Realities" please visit his website at www.simonperchik.com. To view one of his interviews please follow use this URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSK774rtfx8>

Knopf published **Marge Piercy's** 20th poetry book, *On the Way Out*, *Turn Off the Light* last fall and *Made in Detroit* before that. Piercy read the audio book. PM Press reprinted 3 of her novels, her book of short stories, *The Cost of Lunch, Etc.* and a book of essays, *My Life, My Body*. Her memoir is *Sleeping with Cats*. Her novels include 17th novel is *Woman on the Edge of Time*, *He, She and It*, *Braided Lives*, and *Sex Wars*.

Denise Provost has been published in such periodicals as *Quadrille*, *Poetry Porch*, and *Muddy River Poetry Review*. Her chapbook *Curious Peach* was published in 2019 by Ibbetson Street Press, and a full length collection is forthcoming from Cervená Barva press in 2021.

Rianon Prushinski is a senior English major at Endicott College in Beverly, Massachusetts. She's lived on the North Shore all her life, in Lynn, Massachusetts. As she concludes her career at Endicott, she's working on her first novel as well as a chapbook of poetry and flash fiction for the Young Writers Series, published by Ibbetson Street Press. Writing has always been her dream.

Christine Remus is an actor, playwright, and now a published poet. Inspired by studies of Makka-HoMeridian Stretches, the poem in this issue is the first of an upcoming series of seasonal energy pathway poetry. She would like to thank Lainie Senechal, Harris Gardner, Chris Bryant, and all those fabulous poets who gave her wings. She is a member of the Amesbury Poet Laureate Committee, John G. Whittier Home, SAG-AFTRA, and a Salem Historical Tour Guide.

Gayle Roby was born and grew up in downstate Illinois. She received an MFA in Poetry from Warren Wilson College. Her work has appeared in several journals, including *The Iowa Review*, *The Ohio Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Ibbetson Street*. She is a retired teacher of English to speakers of other languages, a Quaker and a member of the Alewife Poets. She lives in Arlington, Massachusetts, with her husband, son and cats.

George Rosatone is a student at Endicott College studying Creative Writing and Film. He grew up in Woburn, MA, where he first developed his passion for writing and visual arts. Currently, he spends his time creating short films and working on his upcoming novel.

Livingston Rossmoor has written and published 15 poetry books. His poems have appeared in numerous publications: local newspapers, magazines, newsletters and overseas publications. In addition, Livingston's poems have been published in *The Lyric*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *California Quarterly* (California State Poetry Society), *Time of Singing* poetry journal, *Chronogram* magazine and *Leaves-of-Ink*.

Hilary Sallick is the author of *Asking the Form* (Červená Barva Press, 2020) and *Winter Roses* (Finishing Line Press, 2017). Her poems appear or are forthcoming in *Mom Egg Review*, *Lily Poetry Review*, *The Poetry Porch*, *Caveat Lector*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Constellations*, and other journals. She teaches reading and writing to adult learners in Somerville, Massachusetts, and she is vice-president of the New England Poetry Club. To learn more, go to hilarysallick.com.

Filmmaker and photographer **Carla Schwartz**'s poems have been widely published, including in *The Practicing Poet* (Diane Lockward, Ed), and in her second collection, *Intimacy with the Wind*, (Finishing Line, 2017). Her CB99videos youtube channel has 2,200,000+ views. Find her at carlapoet.com, wakewiththesun.blogspot.com, or on Twitter, or Instagram @cb99videos. Her recent publications have been included in *The Ear*, *Channel*, and *Ibbetson Street*.

Claire Scott is an award winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has been accepted by the *Atlanta Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *Enizagam* and *Healing Muse*, among others. Claire is the author of *Waiting to be Called* and *Until I Couldn't*. She is the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters' Journey in Photography and Poetry*.

Lainie Senechal is a poet, painter and environmentalist, and the first Poet Laureate of Amesbury, Massachusetts. She has read and featured at many venues throughout New England. Her poetry has appeared in various journals and four anthologies. She co-authored two volumes of poetry. Her chapbook is *Vocabulary of Awakening*. She is currently the Poet-in-Residence at Massachusetts Audubon's Joppa Flats Education Center in Newburyport.

Zvi A. Sesling, Poet Laureate of Brookline, Massachusetts (2017-2020), has published numerous poems and flash fiction. He edits *Muddy River Poetry Review*. Sesling is author of *War Zones*, *The Lynching of Leo Frank*, *Fire Tongue* and *King of the Jungle* and chapbooks *Simple Game*, *Baseball Poems*, *Love Poems From Hell* and *Across Stones of Bad Dreams*. He was nominated for five Pushcart Prizes and his books were nominated for national and local awards. He lives in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts with his wife Susan J. Dechter.

Branton Shearer is the author of more than ten books and is an international consultant for the implementation of the theory of multiple intelligences in schools, universities and businesses. *Breakwall Book* (Tout Press, Kent, Ohio) is his collection of poems and he has poems published in *Ibbetson Street* #31 and #43. His primary role currently is as an instructor for finger games and nursery rhymes for 3 year old grandson Alan.

Wendell Smith is a retired physician who lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. His poetry has appeared in *Kansas Quarterly*, *Constellation*, *View Northwest*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Muddy River Poetry Review* and elsewhere. He won the Sidney Cox Prize at Dartmouth College where he met Ramon Guthrie in the '60's. He thinks Guthrie's masterpiece *Maximum Security Ward* should become to 20th century poetry what *Moby Dick* became to 19th century fiction.

Priscilla Turner Spada's poems and artwork are in numerous publications including: *Ibbetson Street* #40 to 48; *Merrimac Mic Anthologies*; *Lark Books*. She has a chapbook, *Light in Unopened Windows*. She has featured and read at many regional venues and has appeared in HERSTORY events at the Actor's Studio, Newburyport, Massachusetts, April Poetry Month at Bunker Hill Community College and readings at the Whittier Home, Amesbury, Massachusetts. She has been a prize winner with the Rockport Poetry Festival. She studies with Rhina P. Espaillat and Alfred Nicol and is a Powow River Poet.

Michael Todd Steffen is the recipient of a 2021 Massachusetts Cultural Council Literary Fellowship. His poetry has appeared in journals, including *The Boston Globe*, *Poem* and *The Lyric*. *On Earth As It Is*, his second book, is forthcoming from Cervena Barva Press.

Sandra Thaxter lives in Newburyport Massachusetts. She was born in Portland, Maine. She is part of the Powow River poetry community led by Alfred Nicol, and Rhina Espaillat. She has two chapbooks published by Finishing Line Press: *The Colors of Water the Shapes of Stone* and *Illuminated* (August, 2020).

Keith Tornheim, a biochemistry professor at Boston University School of Medicine, has five recent books, *I Am Lilith*, *Dancer on the Wind*; *Spirit Boat: Poems of Crossing Over*; *Can You Say Kaddish for the Living?*, *Fireflies*, and *Spoiled Fruit: Adam and Eve in Eden and Beyond*. His poems have appeared in *Ibbetson Street*, *The Somerville Times*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Muddy River Poetry Review* and *Poetica*.

Paulette Demers Turco, a Powow River Poet, is editor of *The Powow River Poets Anthology II* (Able Muse Press, 2021) and co-organizer of Powow poetry readings. Her poetry also appears or is forthcoming in *The Lyric*, *The Poetry Porch*, *Quill & Parchment*, *Loch Raven Review*, *Mezzo Cammin*, 2020 *Hippocrates Award Anthology*, and others. Her chapbook *In Silence* was published by Finishing Line Press, 2018. Awards include the Robert Frost Poetry Award; 1st place, Rockport 2019 Ekphrastic Poetry Contest; MFA in Writing President's Award from Lesley University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she earned her MFA.

Poet **Molly Lynn Watt** lives in Cambridge, Mass with her husband, Dan. Her poem "Civil Rights Update" is paired with Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech in the Dallas Public School curriculum. The play, *George and Ruth: Songs and Letters of the Spanish Civil War*, co-written with Dan Watt, is available at CD Baby. Her poetry books *Shadow People* and *On Wings of Song: A Journey into the Civil Rights Era* is available at Ibbetson Street Press. Her poem "Jazz Riff" is in a Cambridge sidewalk.

Sandra Wyllie has been writing poetry for the last twelve years. She has been inspired by two great female poets, Emily Dickenson and Anne Sexton. She also has been inspired by two great male poets, William Carlos Williams and Charles Bukowski. In her leisure time she enjoys nature and photography, as well as singing. Sandra Wyllie has a YouTube channel under Sandy Pall. She has been published in the international *Lucidity Poetry Journal* and in *Ibbetson Street* magazine.